

Water Crisis of 2020: Project Abstract
Alternative Future Project
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The year is 2030 and freshwater is the new oil. A world of hyper-water conscious policies and citizens came about from the great water crisis of the 2020s. Drought conditions, pollution, waste disposal, and over-draw on aquifers made fresh water scarce and drastically affected water availability for the United States. Regions like California took harder hits due to unsustainable water practices for decades, despite the location's natural drier climate. Water reuse and conservation became a requirement during the 2020's, which spurred a greater and much-needed lifestyle change for those living in California. The "problem" quickly transformed from water no longer being a readily available resource, to the socio-technical systems involved in the drawing, use, and disposal of wastewater needing to be reconfigured to allow us to live more sustainably in 2030.

The water crisis of 2020 came from society's long-rooted view of water as a luxury in the 20th century due to the emergence of public water systems, filtration, and purification. Population increase caused an increase in water consumption for personal and recreational reasons, with little regard to the geographical water restraints of an area. California's population expanded outward in suburban sprawl fashion. Many neighborhoods boasted large pools and green lawns in a region where natural rainfall could never sustain that lifestyle. Unsurprisingly, California had the most freshwater overdraw in 2011, which led to drought like conditions within the region that extended into the water crisis across the United States.

The technological approach to live more sustainable lifestyles in relation to water use was the implementation of greywater systems in residential and commercial buildings. This new federal building code allowed homeowners specifically to recycle the water used for bathing, washing, and cooking and use it for home gardens. Collection tanks were piloted in east coast locations with high flooding propensities. The tanks stored rainwater for reuse, and these practices were soon adopted in California in 2030.

The EPA enacted “Meatless Monday” and banned the use of paper for companies, being that there used to be a huge water input for cattle and agriculture, as well as the production of paper. These political implementations (i.e. legal shower limits) caused a change in lifestyle that directly impacted the way citizens valued water and human relations with nature.

If one were to find themselves in the post-water crisis world, they could fit right in by considering water the same way we consider money in 2016. Guiding principles of society follow the ideas of saving as much “money” as you can, using as little “money” to create the most product, and showing commitment to a large savings reserve is important. Water is now one of the most precious commodities, and everyone is working to save water, reuse it as much as possible, and expand clean water systems to grow our water reserves. Sustainability is no longer a buzzword; it’s a way of life. The government, citizens, and industries all have taken on different roles to change the way society consumes water. The government rewrites its policies to focus on the sustainability of water for our future. Citizens adopt greywater reuse systems, and change their eating habits to vegetarian and locally grown produce. Companies and industries are all vying with ways to be the lowest water user.

The first step to manage the new reality was to target people’s attitudes towards the conservation of freshwater and educate them on how to use it sustainably. By implementing educational practices among schools across the country (not just California), American citizens better understand the water cycle and our important role within it. The federal government supported these changes and implemented the use of greywater systems and conservation of household water use for suburban homes, while also calling on large industries, especially agriculture, to reduce their water footprints. Through the combination of technologies, policies, and social change the 2030 era hopes to never have a water crisis of 20--.